circumcision was public, and the woman to whom it was done underwent the gibes and insults of all the inhabitants.

The life of the young people is the same as that of the adults. The virginity of a woman is considered unimportant and the Fan have sexual relations from the time they are capable of cohabitation. When a young girl has a child, it belongs to her parents, from whom the child acquires wealth; there is no search for the father and the young girl keeps all the respect which she enjoyed. Young girls are free to give themselves to whomever they please. This very broad morality, however, has one important qualification in that there are, so to speak, no young girls, the little girls having been married off by their parents very early, sometimes even before their birth.

Marriage (alug). Men rarely marry before the age of twenty years, and usually later, because they do not have the means to pay the dowry for taking a wife.

Exogamy is always practiced because marriage between people of the same tribe is sterile. Marriage between cousins is forbidden up to the third generation and in general, marriage is forbidden between persons linked by any kind of kinship; in this case there is also prohibition of sexual relations. No penalty is prescribed for infraction, but the guilty ones will fall ill and their children, if they have any, will not live.

Occasionally there are instances when marriage between relatives is authorized, but only after the practitioner has removed the prohibition by the process [88] called abvule minsem. The practitioner goes to find some termite earth (ngurege), a plant (mekaga), and a vine (nyola dzik); the plant and vine are folded and placed in an etok (a container of banana leaves) full of water. The termite earth is placed on a nzum (see the description in the section on conception) and the etok is placed underneath. The two kinsmen who want to marry also stand underneath it, while the practitioner climbs onto the nzum, dips the leaves in the etok, and says, "meme ose mi waga bo e wo ma ya yui" (I remove every prohibition that you have made). He hits the termite earth with the leaves and then takes the etok and pours the contents onto the heads of the two people from whom he is removing the prohibition. With the remainder, the man and woman each takes a washing.

A man who has not enough dowry but who finds a young girl eager to marry him may take her away in the night; when the parents come

limited to a vegetarian diet without salt or spices, to "freshen the blood." They received sexual instruction from the ngengañ, diviner-healer, who performed the operation, while the elders, minlôl, examined /the boys/ in knowledge of the mebatan, "salutations" or genealogies: in actual fact circumcision ended the prohibition against coition by showing the danger of involuntary incest in case relationships were not well understood. Women were not allowed to be present at the operation, which the ngengañ performed with a special razor, cauterizing the wound with a pimento decoction. A boy was held by his father, who pronounced the formula that lifted the taboo against coition. The foreskin was usually buried under a tree, perhaps a banana, perhaps a tree indicated by clan or lineage tradition, perhaps chosen, if we accept Trilles, for totemic reasons. Sometimes the foreskin was preserved for magic use. While the scar was healing, the circumcised boy could wear only a special vegetable breechcloth which was renewed daily; during this time no woman was supposed to speak to him or to touch him or his breechcloth; this he took advantage of so as to steal food and various things. /96/ Once the scar had healed, he could no longer appear in public naked. This whole /procedure/ is only partly followed at the present time; furthermore, since the time for the operation has been generally made earlier, circumcised boys who have not yet reached puberty (1) are often

1. A Protestant Ntoumou chief in Ambam told me that he had had his children circumcised earlier so as to be able to send them to the district school without running the risk of their breaking the sexual and food taboos of the uncircumcised when away from his supervision.

seen going about nude in villages. According to Trilles and Largeau, in the past some youths remained uncircumcised, minsôôl, until they had killed their first enemy. At the present time all youths are circumcised, even Christians; the missions have only rarely tried to oppose the practice and always unsuccessfully.

After circumcision the ndôman was able to have sexual relations and eat certain foods prohibited before. He went to live with other

88| youths in the abo and prepared for further initiations, while beginning
●83 to participate fully in masculine activities, work and games. The bekungu (Fang, bekhun?) initiation that came directly after circumcision was not a general practice. My own impression is that this was not a tribal or clan rite like ɛ̀ɛ̀, but that of an association of diviners or seers involving only specially endowed individuals, perhaps related to the ndôngô rite restricted to grown men, which appears to have identical ritual tattoo marks.

91| For the mo'minga reaching puberty there is no stage equivalent to circumcision. In spite of what Trilles says, excision has apparently never been used except as a punishment for certain kinds of adultery or mild incest. It must not be forgotten that a little girl very soon went to live with her affinal family and that she was deflowered as soon as she reached puberty. She very rarely remained ɛ̀nnan, that is, pubescent and unmarried, and then for a very short time. One might almost say that her adolescence was telescoped into the period between childhood and the arrival of puberty marked by the mevungu rite.

582 This adolescent phase is now prolonged by the law fixing the
146 marriageable age at fourteen (puberty usually comes during the twelfth year), by school attendance, and by the change in the bride-price system. Most of my friends of a certain age see in these facts the reasons for a crisis in immorality which they probably to some extent exaggerate.

Nevertheless, first menstruation was apparently acknowledged in a ceremony in which only women took part, but this may have been merely a preliminary to the mevungu initiation, about which hardly anything is known. Otherwise /as regards female adolescence/ coition is forbidden to immature girls, while unmarried girls who have begun menstruating have actually great sexual freedom, even in Christian circles. It must, however, be realized that only too often, especially in schools, there are girls deflowered before puberty, whereas boys seem to wait for circumcision /97/ before their first exploits — there
[83] are parents, worried about their sons' "good behavior," who give
146 them aphrodisiacs as encouragement.

d. Transition to Adulthood

[82] The ndoman is not yet a real person, nya mɔ̀ɔ̀; undoubtedly he participates in men's work, in hunting and clearing the land, but he